

WASHINGTON – In an effort to increase transparency and access to congressional research services, Reps. Mike Quigley (IL-05) and Leonard Lance (NJ-07) announced they have introduced the “Congressional Research Service Electronic Accessibility Act of 2012.”

The Congressional Research Service (CRS) is a little-known but highly regarded division of the Library of Congress. The research service is by law exclusively for the use of members of Congress and congressional staff. The Lance-Quigley measure would amend that law and allow the public release of congressional reports that CRS produces.

“The Congressional Research Service is invaluable to lawmakers, who rely on its non-partisan work to help inform the policy decisions we make every day,” **said Congressman Mike Quigley**. “Their policy reports are funded by American taxpayers and should be accessible to American taxpayers. This legislation will put more power in the hands of the public and increase transparency, so that every day citizens can continue being the government’s best watchdog.”

“American taxpayers spend more than \$100 million a year supporting the work of the Congressional Research Service,” **said Congressman Leonard Lance**. “It is good public policy to allow educators, students, members of the news media and everyday citizens access to CRS’ non-partisan taxpayer-funded reports. What is good for Congress should be good for the general public.”

The lawyers, economists, reference librarians, and social, natural, and physical scientists of CRS offer invaluable research and analysis to members of Congress on all current and emerging issues of national policy. CRS has a responsibility to ensure that members of the House and Senate and their staff have available the best possible information and analysis on which to base the policy decisions.

CRS is governed by requirements for accuracy, objectivity, balance, and nonpartisanship – the very sort of analysis sought and valued by engaged constituents. As a dedicated congressional support agency, CRS is joined by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) and the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) in providing Congress with information and analysis that is unequalled by any other national legislature. While GAO and CBO reports are already available to the public, CRS reports are not.

“This new bill introduced today by Reps. Lance and Quigley opens the door to greater understanding of Congress by the American people, the media and government employees. It's time to bring reports from the Capitol's publicly funded think tank online for the public to use,” **said Daniel Schuman, policy counsel at the non-partisan Sunlight Foundation**, which is a non-profit that advocates for government transparency.

“Librarians have long been supporters of public access to CRS reports. The Lance-Quigley bill would direct the Clerk of the House to put widely-distributed CRS reports on a publicly available website and doing so would be a boon for researchers, students and the public. Similar to GAO reports, which are publicly available online from the 1920s to the present, CRS reports offer in-depth information, analysis and legislative histories across the entire legislative process. Publishing CRS reports on one publicly available website would greatly enhance their availability to the public,” **said James Jacobs, co-founder of Free Government Information.**

Numerous good government groups and advocates for more congressional transparency have endorsed the measure – including the Sunlight Foundation, iSolon.org, Progressive Librarians Guild, Society of Professional Journalists and the Utah Foundation for Open Government, WildEarth Guardians, Defending Dissent Foundation, Free Government Information, Washington Coalition for Open Government, American Library Association, Association of Research Libraries, Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington, Government Accountability Project, OpenTheGovernment.org, Federation of American Scientists, American Association of Law Libraries and Investigative Reporters and Editors.

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